Harold- I'll have more to write you soon - HR

8/3/72

Dear Dick,

I was glad to get copies of your 7/27 to Harold and 7/28 to Wecht. I was a little concerned that I had not heard from you ~~&~~ about the recent flap, and I found these two letters gnnerally very reassuring.

I was especially glad to read your letter to Harold, for several reasons. For one, it was a relief to see that you do not find my judgement in the recent matter irrational. I have not felt my position to be irrational, but I feared you might if you were strongly of the opinion that Wecht was entirely justified in seeing the pictures and X-rays as he is about to, and in the particular manner he has conducted himself. I also respect what you say about Gary's and Jerry's actions, and I make two comments on this:

1) I agree with almost everything you wrote about Gary, Jerry and Harold. I do not believe it would be in Harold's interest now to continue a relationship with either. Certainly, he should not make them privy to his work, for they have destroyed any basis of trust. I'm not so sure about a continuing friendship, but I think that would be difficult, if only because Harold has been so hurt personnally and Lil does not want either as a guest at the house again. I can understand Lil's position, and she feels very strongly about such matters. Also, I think I should point out, with respect to your reason for saying that in the event he was asked beforehand Harold ~~&~~ would have been right to refuse permission to distribute the death certificate, you have taken an essentially pragmatic position, i.e., what Jerry and Gary wanted to do was unnecessary. I agree, but I go further in thinking that there is an ethical question because this was the product of Harold's work. Harold has made his discoveries available to every responsible critic, and he <u>did</u> tell Wecht about the death certificate long beofre Jerry and Gary decided to play God. But I think Harold does have a legitimate claim to this as his literary property. That can be debated, I know. Still, you spotted what hits me as the essential issue: This was done deliberately behind Harold's back.

2) You showed great insight in your analysis of Gary and Jerry's actions as "conscious deception for the purpose of covering guilt." Jerry admits this now, in his own way. He tells me I am arrogant because I wrote him an angry letter (I <u>was</u> angry, and I meant everything I said). Of course, he sees no arrogance in what he has done, and writes to me that he'd do the same thing over again, the only difference being "that I probably would have told Harold what I was doing and accepted the consequences rather than hope he wouldn't find out."

With respect to Wecht, from your description, he sent us the same letter soliciting help. In my response to him, I told him I intended to be frank. I let him know I had no enthusiam over what he was about to do, and that his behavior so far has appeared quite careless to me, e.g., not consulting with anyone who could advise him, esp. Harold. I let him know I felt there was a great danger in doing what he did, that is, making application under the contract, which is illegal, and I said I felt the gov't was using him to serve their own evil ends, otherwise they would not have let ~~&~~ him in. I also told him, as you did, that I felt there was no need for anyone to brief him--we both gave the same reason. I refused to attend the "meeting" because, I said, I did not think that a good way to "digest" what he sees and, furthermore, I would not discuss the medical evidence in front of the people who will probably be there, e.g., the CTIA bunch and maybe even Lifton. I told him I would speak to him after the examination, inprivate. I added that he should not waste his time looking at "other items" as he said he intended, but rather devote all his time to the contract materials.

You had the right idea but definately the wrong appraach in your advice to Wecht that he "insist" on seeing all the films, not just what the panel and Lattimer were shown. I mentioned this elliptically to Wecht, and in so doing I pointed out what is at fault with your suggestion and with his whole approach: Because he has been granted permission under the terms of the contract, the Archives is obliged to show him only what is listed in the appendix of the contract. That is all that he has been granted access for, and it is not complete. He is powerless to "insist" on seeing everything now, and if the Archives has the rest of the films, which I doubt, they do not have to show them to him. This is only one of the reasons he should not have applied under the contract. The most obvious reason to me is that in doing this, he has honored an illegal contract and may have seriously hurt any chances for proper court action against the real suppression of this material. Furthermore, there was no need to draw up that contract for these materials could have been withheld under the exemptions in the existing laws at the time, or by executive order. The contract, however, transferred all the blame to the Kennedys and they had no part in it, even if they did abdicate what we may view as their moral responsibility. If you do not believe me, then look at how the New York Times played the story when the contract was leaked to them--"Kennedys Suppress JFK Autopsy Data," in effect. I fear that what Wecht is doing serves the interests of the government for it will help take the blame off everyone who is guilty and pin it on the Kennedys, who really did nothing and certainly did not suppress this material from the WC. This is the position I hold, but it is really the work and thinking of Harold. I have not really given you the detail I could in person, but this should give you a general idea. Harold had a great plan which would have avoided the mess we anticipate, he asked Cyril for help, and Cyril didn't even respond. And where Harold was trying to test the contract in court or build the foundation for testing it, Cyril first promised and then refused to help.

So, to get down to the nitty-gritty, my real fear--and Harold's too--is that what Wecht is really interested in, if only subconsciously, is making headlines, not making a responsible, productive examination. Even worse, he may be trying to duplicate some of Harold's work, which he does not understand. What else am I to think? Wecht makes the application without seeking the council of anyone except possibly Sylvia, who lives in the past on this and who is no devil's advocate with him; he refuses any kind of assistance to Harold, which has to be regarded with suspicion no matter how he feels about Harold (and most of this came before he called Harold a pan-handler); he does not call me after Sylvia asked him to; instead he consults with Bob Smith, who knows so little that he's still trying to find out what an explosive bullet is, and Lifton.

There is another consideration to add. Harold read my letter to Cyril and said there was a way in which I could have been helpful if Cyril has serious purpose in mind and not publicity seeking. There are certain things he should do just in examining the contract materials which would be very helpful and constructive. He will need plenty of time to do this, and as he has it planned now, considering that there are over 250 items listed in the contract alone, not to mention the "other items" he wants to see, he has, out of a good working day, about 2 minutes to examine each item. Needless to say, he better not plan on crapping around with this "other items" jazz and get down to the reall stuff. I decided that before I wrote Cyril with this new advice, which would be a cumbersome job, I'd call him and talk to him, to see just what he plans to do. I called Monday, 7/31. He was out of town, so I left a message to call me. It is now 8/3, Thursday evening and no call. I know he is busy with a special autopsy he just did in Phila., but he plans to go in in less than a week, so why is he waiting to return my call?

These things have to make me wonder. He has given himself not enough time to make a decent examination of just the autopsy films and the clothes, yet he

plans to lâokK at "other items" as well. He finds time to talk to every schmoe who has done enough work on the case to erect a paper-mache tree on the grassy knoll, but he can't find time to talk to me--and I happen to be one of a minority of two who do not embrace him as the hero who is going to break this wide open.

I appreciate your recommending me to Cyril as the only person who can assist him. I am sorry you did not include Harold. Harold has never refused to help Cyril on this, he has merely said he would wait until the time came, and now that the time is here, he has not been asked. I know you have fears about Harold "dominating," and other factors relating to Harold's personality, but I am not in complte agreement. I do believe Harold could be of genuine help, and certainly his competence cannot be questioned. He will not be able to help, and I don't think I would either, if Wecht is dominated by Bob Smith or Bud, and the likes.

If Wecht is prepared to listen to me, it is possible he may do something worthwhile and of value to us. If not, and I fear he really is not, the overall results might be just as bad. You see, I think there is another danger in Cyril facing the press. If my analysis of why he has buddenly been given access is correct, then surely the gov't will have some member of the press prepared, and I hate to think what will happen at the fateful press conference when Cyril is asked, "Are you the same Dr. Wecht who said on the Long John Nebel show that JFK, RFK and MLK were killed by the CIA?" Nobody can undo the past.

I am sorry that we can't get together this summer, for I was looking forward to seeing you and talking. I hope you are well.

Best,

cc. Harold

P.S. In case you missed my last note, I'd appreciate it if you could return the file I loaned you on the "Weisberg Threat," that mysterious message. I would like to fefer to it now. Thanks.

Because of the other things I have sent you on this, I lend you this for return whenever convenient. One of the things I learn from this is that by learning over backward not to pressure him and by insisteing that he reach his own decision and doing his own thinking, he came, independently, to approximately my own, going farthur in some areas. I think the results include easing him out of what for even the most precocious 19-year-old must have been an exceedingly difficult position, bordering on the crisis, and helping his growth and ability to analyze, including into such things not normally the concern of 19-year-olds, even precocious, hidden motive and political (not-party)politicas. H